▼ ▼ ▼ CHAPTER 9

Religion

African-Americans have a rich religious tradition. Religion has played two central roles in the history of African-Americans in South Carolina. First, the church was an oasis for African-Americans. It helped them endure the many hardships of enslavement and prejudice. It helped by providing emotional support and social services. Second, the church was a center of revolt. Church was the one place where blacks could meet as a group without arousing great fears among whites. Ministers were the one group whose education whites were least likely to oppose. Thus, the church was the best group around with which to challenge enslavement or create a civil rights movement. Ministers were the natural leaders of revolt. Yet these two roles played by the church created some conflict as well. Teaching people to endure hardships and look forward to an afterlife is quite different from leading them to revolt or to demand civil rights. That part of the story comes much later.

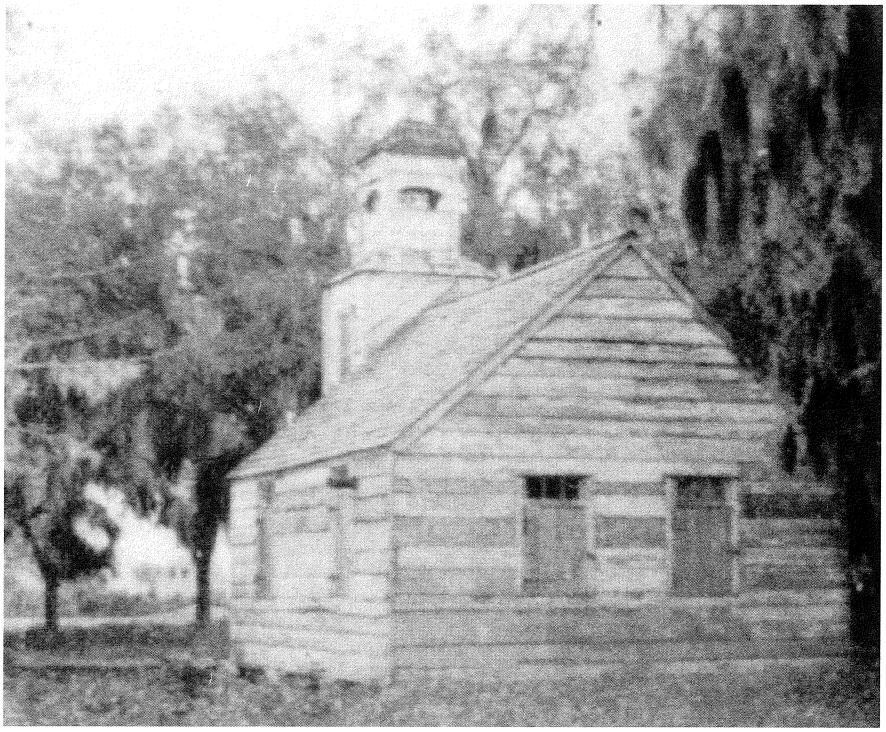
In this chapter we will see how African-American religious groups grew in the state. You will see religion changed from an institution of control to one of freedom. You will learn that although the beliefs sound much like European Christian beliefs, the religious forms and style have a definite African flavor. Some of those practices are dying out. However, some of the African flavor has added spice to the religious life of many people of all races.

Conversions to Christianity

The enslaved Africans who were brought to the New World were not Christians. Some were Moslems. Moslems followed the religious practices of Islam, a religion founded in the 600s in Arabia by the prophet Mohammed. Many had other religious beliefs, such as reverence for ancestors and adoration of the earth and nature. At first, the planters did not try to convert them. They did not want to give the enslaved Africans an opportunity to meet in groups and develop leaders. In the early 1700s, Anglican missionaries began their first efforts to convert the enslaved people. However, not until they began large-scale conversion efforts on the plantations in the 1800s did they meet with much success.

Conversion to Christianity raised questions about the institution of slavery itself. Enslaving non-Christians was one thing. However, enslaving fellow Christians was quite another. Some religious leaders wondered whether these enslaved persons would automatically be entitled to freedom once they had converted. If this was to be the case, planters would certainly oppose any conversions. So the white religious leaders sought justifications for enslavement in the *Bible*. Some argued that because the *Bible* mentioned enslavement, it must be okay in the eyes of God. Others took the position that conversion would free only the soul, not the body. Once they found ways to justify continued enslavement among fellow Christians, the planters withdrew most of their opposition. Large-scale religious conversions then took place.

In truth, this reasoning was weak. However, it allowed both groups of whites to get what they wanted. White ministers could save souls. The planters could keep the people to whom those souls belonged in enslavement. This all goes to show that if people try hard enough, they can justify almost anything. Many whites even argued that enslavement was good for the Africans because it allowed them to be brought to Christ.



This old church was probably used by enslaved Africans. It was photographed on a plantation on Port Royal about 1865. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, *slide 68 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Courtesy of South Caroliniana Library.*

Religion as a Means of Control

Soon the masters realized other benefits in religious conversions. They could use Christian doctrine to encourage the enslaved Africans to accept their fate. Converts had to learn religious catechisms that reinforced the concept of obedience. Catechisms are sets of questions and answers that teach what are supposed to be important religious truths. Saying them over and over again leads to stronger belief. For example, the catechism that follows was written for the enslaved Africans to learn. You decide what it was supposed to teach.

Q. Who keeps the snakes and all bad things from hurting you?
A. God does.
Q. Who gave you a master and a mistress?
A. God gave them to me.
Q. Who says that you must obey them?
A. God says that I must.
Q. What book tells you these things?
A. The Bible.
Q. How does God do all his work?
A. He does it right.
Q. Does God love to work?
A. Yes, God is always at work.
Q. What does God say about your work?
A. He that will not work shall not eat.

[Excerpted from Frederick Douglass' Paper, June 2, 1854, from the Southern Episcopalian, Charleston, S.C., April 1854. Reprinted in The Black American: A Documentary History by Leslie Fischal and Benjamin Quarles, Scott-Foresman Publishers, 1976.]

The Double Meaning of Religious Words

Christian religion was a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it taught obedience. However, it also taught a sense of humanity, brotherhood, and concern. It showed that God's love extended to the oppressed and against the oppressors. African-Americans had a saying that there was a "*Bible* within the *Bible*." While the catechisms that the enslaved people learned taught obedience, enslaved preachers helped their flocks see that Christian religion could offer what scholars have called a "message of hope."

Some deeply religious mistresses taught enslaved African-Americans to read so that they could read the *Bible*, despite the risk that they might get dangerous ideas. Teaching enslaved African-Americans to read was against the law. Slaveholders not

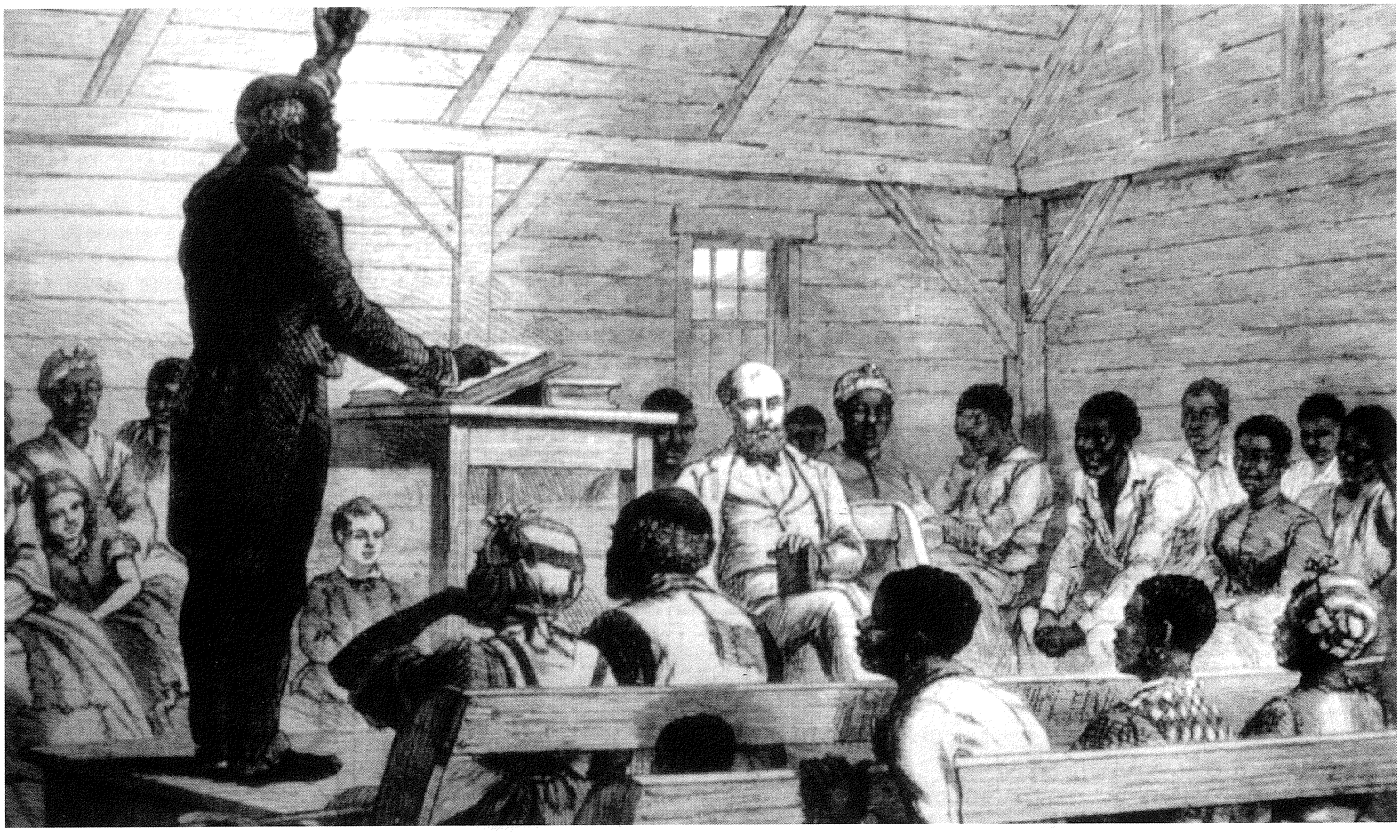
only feared that African-Americans would read those portions of the *Bible* that discussed revolts but also that those who learned to write would write out passes for themselves. This would allow them to escape to freedom. However, many denominations required that their members be literate. Being able to study the *Bible* was important. As African-Americans learned and read about the enslaved Hebrews, they tended to identify with them. If the Jews could survive the cruel bondage of the Pharaoh in Egypt, they could survive enslavement in South Carolina.

Enslaved African-Americans used religion to meet their own needs. It helped them to survive each difficult day. They added their own flavor and style. They composed sacred songs using the rhythm and chant methods that had been common in Africa. They created many spirituals such as "Go Down Moses," "Deep River," and "Swing Low-Sweet Chariot." All of these have moved beyond the African-American religious community. They have left an emotional stamp on Christian people all around the world.

As you learned earlier in the chapter on resistance to enslavement, the songs often had a double meaning. The words spoke of deliverance and a beautiful life of freedom and joy. To the masters they referred to life in heaven. However, the singer might be thinking of freedom in this world. In religious songs, these words and thoughts could be safely expressed. However, speaking those words might suggest ideas that frightened whites. They might refer to revolt in this world instead of life in the next. What the listener thought determined the meaning.

An enslaved preacher known as "David" ran into this problem. His preaching gained him a bit of fame in Savannah. Around the 1760s, his master brought him to Charleston to preach. Unfortunately, his Charleston audience found David's words about wanting freedom threatening. His master removed him from

Enslaved Africans at worship in a plantation church in about 1863. The owner keeps a watchful eye on the proceedings. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, *slide 1-8 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Courtesy of South Caroliniana Library.*



Charleston before he was attacked. Enslaved preachers quickly learned how to phrase their words so they did not alarm whites. At the same time, the words encouraged the enslaved to endure and wait for freedom, for the "coming of the kingdom in the year of Jubilee."

Religion and Revolution

Religion provided a sense of worth for African-Americans. Even if whites did not respect them, blacks were worthy in the eyes of God. It gave assurance that justice would finally win, even if not in this world. Religion gave hope. Because the words had a double meaning, salvation appeared to be more than just a promised life in another world. These could be words of revolution. Perhaps the whites should have been afraid.

Religion did help inspire uprisings. Although no uprising followed David's preaching, several uprisings did involve religious leaders. These leaders often combined two things. First, they drew upon African religious mysticism. This means experiencing religious truth through feelings and emotion rather than learning by listening to teachings. Second, they added the belief that God would hear the cry of the oppressed. One of these revolutionary preachers was "Gullah Jack." He helped bring about the Vesey uprising which you read about earlier. All of these leaders provided an inspiration to stand against injustice. Without them, the revolts might not have taken place. As a result, by the 1840s South Carolina passed laws that made illegal the gathering of African-Americans in groups even to worship.

As you know, these revolts did not succeed. However, they were not the last revolts. Later ones took new forms as widespread revolutions using tactics of civil disobedience, not violent attack. Once again, religious leaders inspired and led. We shall turn to that story later.

Christian Religion with an African Style

While singing and preaching, African-Americans added what is called "group jubilation" to Christian religious rituals. This means audience participation, clapping, and speaking out when the Spirit moves you to do so. This is not just singing together. It is singing, swaying, and dancing at the same time, usually in response to the minister who is leading with chants or words. This had long been a part of African life. Now it became a part of American Christian religious life. When revival movements swept through South Carolina and the nation in the 1700s, African-American audiences were ready. They were already in the spirit of these emotional movements. They were probably more ready than were most whites who held their emotions in check. However, over the years that spirituality and emotion slowly found its way into white churches. This contribution has enriched the religious experiences of many people across the state and nation.

Grave Decorations

From the early days onward, African-Americans decorated graves with a variety of everyday items. African-Americans brought the tradition of decorating graves to the New World from their homelands. In the late 1800s, Europeans traveling in Africa saw graves decorated with items that the dead person had used in everyday life. Scholars think the custom was based on the belief that a dead person might return for her possessions unless she took them along. African societies used a variety of different types of items. In Ghana and the Ivory Coast, the Akan people placed pottery on the graves. People in Angola and the Congo also placed pottery and other items, such as old cooking-pots and bottles, on graves. The Yoruba sometimes buried a dead person in the floor of the house and placed a china plate on a nearby wall to indicate the spot. In many other parts of West Africa, people placed the possessions of the dead on their graves. The Kongo placed the last item used by the dead person on the grave, believing it held some of that person's spirit. They hoped that through dreams some of the abilities of the dead would find their way to the living.

African-Americans followed the Kongo tradition. They placed the last items that the deceased person had used, whether dishes, a medicine bottle, or a toy, on top of the grave. Breaking the item was customary both in Africa and in the United States. However, they put it back together in such a way that it would not

Memory jug, about 1920 to 1940, maker unknown. Tin canister with pieces of crockery and glassware. These creations, often used as part of a grave decoration, used broken pieces of items from the personal possessions of the deceased as decorations. Reproduced with permission of Louanne La Rouche. From "Conflict and Transcendence: African-American Art in South Carolina," organized by the Columbia Museum of Art.

look broken when it was sitting on the grave. Some believed that if the object was not broken, other family members would die. Others believed that this custom symbolized the end, or breaking, of life. The custom probably had nothing to do with the fear of theft. Stealing from a grave was considered bad luck.

Memory jugs may be an exception to this rule. A memory jug was made when a person died. The jug usually had some objects embedded in it that were important in the person's life, such as broken crockery or broken glass. Several explanations exist as to why memory jugs were made and how they were used. One is that they were used as grave decorations. Another explanation is that they were just pretty objects made in memoriam to the person but not placed on the grave. Because they were considered "pretties," people sometimes stole them. That is why they were generally hard to find even when grave decorating was more common.

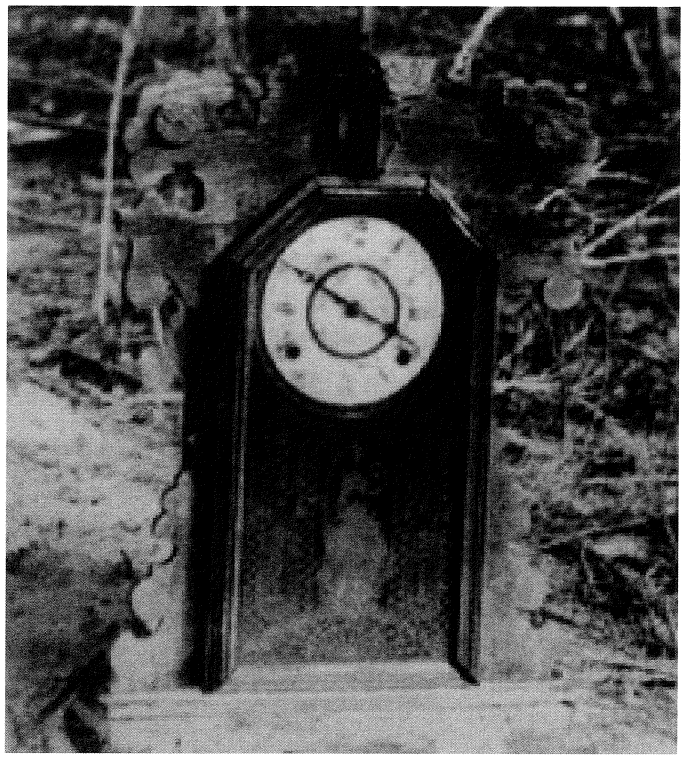
Yet another custom with African roots was ritual animal killing. A small animal, perhaps a white chicken, would be killed when a family member died. For the Kongo people, the white chicken stood for one's ancestors and for the healing power that comes from the dead. African-Americans sometimes used chicken symbols on the grave. In one graveyard in South Carolina, a researcher found glass chickens placed among oyster shells. Another found a giant white rooster on the grave of a South Carolina child buried in the 1960s.

Using some arrangement of shells was also common. Several explanations exist for this. One is that shells were associated with water. One must pass through water to reach the spirit realm underground. A researcher suggested that the shells represented a division between the lands of the living and the dead. Among the Kongo people, shells symbolize immortality. Another scholar suggested that people living on the coasts of both continents used the seashells simply because they were readily available. He noted that while the Gullah used seashells, African-Americans inland were more likely to decorate graves with such items as toys, jars of rice, or medicine bottles.

African practices influenced the use of grave markers. The Bakongo people in Africa used the color white to symbolize death. Today, many of the concrete markers have a piece of broken glass set in them with a piece of white paper behind the glass. African-Americans often place a variety of white colored items on a grave.

A twentieth century variation on the custom of marking a grave was to use clocks. Sometimes the time on them was set to twelve. This applied a bit of Christian theology, indicating the time when the dead would be awakened on Judgment Day. Sometimes, the clocks would be set to indicate the time when the person had died. One scholar believes that this was to indicate when the person became part of the spirit world.

Some African peoples believed that the dead could return to mix among the living. They carved stone figures out of a soft white rock. The figures were to act as guardians on the graves. Perhaps this is the basis for the tradition of carving wooden figures shaped roughly like a human to place on the grave.



An African-American grave in 1947 that illustrates the tradition of grave decorations, this one with a clock. Library of Congress, LC-USF34 43572.

Certainly Africans believed in honoring their dead. They respected their ancestors.

African tradition even determined the direction in which the coffin was laid in the grave. Scholars have reported that in Central Africa the coffin was laid with the head pointing to the east. People carried this custom to South Carolina and the rest of the South. Migrants who left the South carried it North.

The custom of grave decorations seems to be dying out today. The ending of this tradition is a loss. The tradition was a reminder to all that the deceased was an individual and a unique person with hopes, dreams, loves, and fears. Today death has become a big industry. It is not as personalized. We have standard grave markers, standard wreaths, and standard flower arrangements.

Establishment of Churches by Free African-Americans

South Carolina's free African-Americans helped create many institutions. Among them were churches. Enslaved African-Americans usually had to worship with or under the watchful eyes of their masters.

Free African-Americans had their own churches, even though whites checked up on them. Usually church members were free to talk about their hopes and desires in their own churches. Several churches existed in South Carolina before the Civil War. Among them were the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, several Baptist churches, and some Catholic churches.

Richard Allen and Absalom Jones founded the AME Church in Philadelphia in the 1780s. Forced to give up his place to a white worshiper, Richard Allen left the Methodist Episcopal Church. Morris Brown, a wealthy Charlestonian, started an AME church in South Carolina in 1817. Members bought land for their church and for a cemetery. Brown tried to bridge the gap between free and enslaved African-Americans. His dream was a church where both groups could work together to form a true community. Three congregations were formed in the Charleston area with over 1,000 members. By 1822 they had 3,000 members. Most of the members were enslaved, but some were free. The church served as a place of refuge for a people under great stress.

Brown's church did not last long. Denmark Vesey was an AME church leader. Even before Vesey's revolt, local authorities harassed church members and sometimes arrested them on "trumped-up" charges. Whites who resented and feared their presence often accused members of disorderly conduct. After Vesey's revolt the church was suspect. Whites feared it could be used as a place to plan future revolts. They closed the church. Its members had to worship in secret until after the Civil War. Morris Brown had to leave Charleston in 1822. Along with several others, he went to Philadelphia by way of the Underground Railroad. There he became a bishop of the AME Church. With their leaders gone, many of his fellow church members back in South Carolina joined the Scottish Presbyterian Church.

Silver Bluff Primitive Baptist Church

Morris Brown's church was not the first African-American congregation in South Carolina. A Baptist church was organized in 1773 at Beech Island, in what later became Aiken County. This church actually grew out of a camp meeting.

Camp meetings were very popular in the 1700s and 1800s. They were like modern day revival meetings except that those attending would actually camp at the location in tents and makeshift buildings instead of going home between services. The meetings would last for days. Whites welcomed African-Americans and often mixed with them at these meetings rather than banishing them to the rear. Camp meetings were popular among African-Americans even in the 1900s as both social and religious events. The meeting provided a chance to see old friends and to celebrate. People would save for months so they could go. We can easily see how some of these informal meetings could grow into organized churches.

At first, the group in the Silver Bluff Church was racially mixed. George Galphin, a large slaveholder in that region, was a supporter. He joined the Silver Bluff Church himself. He allowed two African-American ministers, David George and George Liele, to preach there. Soon blacks outnumbered whites. Liele was a powerful speaker. Both whites and blacks enjoyed his sermons. He had been enslaved, but his owner was so impressed by Liele's preaching that he freed him.

During the American Revolution the church was abandoned. British forces occupied the area. Liele, David George, and about 50 enslaved members of Silver Bluff Church sided with the British. Many of them left the country after the British surrender. The church was reestablished in 1783 under an enslaved African-American minister, Rev. Jesse Peter. Much smaller now, the church struggled for several years after the war. However, it could not survive and closed in 1793.

Catholic Churches

While Methodists and Baptists organized churches in the late 1700s and early 1800s, Catholics became active in the Charleston area. The Catholic Church sent Bishop John England from Ireland to America. He did more than organize white Catholics in his diocese. He also helped African-Americans organize both Catholic churches and schools. The effort was not without some difficulty and opposition. St. James, the Greater Catholic Church was founded around 1824 in Ritter, near Charleston. At first it served both races. In time, however, all the whites left. Vincent Davis, once enslaved, kept it going. The church is still going strong. Davis's descendants are still active members.

Ladson Presbyterian Church

Before the Civil War, only a few African-Americans were Presbyterians. Ladson United Presbyterian Church is the oldest African-American church in Columbia. It was founded in 1828. The property was given to the church because African-Americans could not own land there. In 1838, members built a chapel. The Rev. George Ladson conducted services there until his death in 1876. The church still stands, but the original chapel burned down in 1896.

African-American Religion after the Civil War

We see that African-Americans in pre-Civil War South Carolina were deeply religious. They took active roles in building churches whenever and wherever they could. Frequently whites helped and supervised. In time the churches often became all African-American. Given the chance, these churches played important roles. They provided resources of comfort and faith. Churches were a center of social life for people who were not welcomed elsewhere in society. They helped develop organizing skills in members. Until the Civil War was over, those skills were kept inside the church.

After the Civil War, the churches gained independence from white supervision. The energy and organizational skills that had been bottled up in a few churches mushroomed. We can see this energy and skill at work in the growth of existing African-American congregations. We can also see it in the creation of many new African-American churches. Church growth created more social and cultural outlets as well.

When the Civil War ended, African-Americans were eager to test their freedom. One way to test free-

dom was to move away from the churches identified with whites. Many white churches wanted to keep black members. However, they did not want to allow black participation in decision-making. In addition, they insisted on keeping segregated seating for services. As a result, African-Americans left these churches. Two church groups with very similar names, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, sent missionaries to the South. Both attracted large numbers of people in many new churches.

The Growth of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church

After the Civil War, the AME Church was reestablished in South Carolina. Bishop Daniel A. Payne, whom you will meet later in the chapter on literature, reorganized it in South Carolina in 1865. His efforts in Charleston led to the reopening of the Emmanuel AME Church. This had been the congregation of Denmark Vesey. You will recall that it had been closed in the 1820s following the revolt he led. Now it could serve as a focal point for worship by African-Americans in Charleston. The AME Church in South Carolina grew quickly. By the early 1900s, more than 79,000 became members.

African-Americans founded a number of other AME churches after the Civil War. A group of freedmen founded Bethel AME church in Columbia in 1866. White Hall AME church was founded in Jenkinsville in 1866. It was the first African-American church in that area. Liberty Hill AME was founded in Summerton the next year. The Liberty Hill Church is another example of the influence of the church in the lives of African-Americans. Not only did it serve as a place of worship, but it was a place for skills and leadership ability to develop at a time when most other avenues to power were closed.

In the mid-1900s, Liberty Hill's pastor, Joseph A. Delaine, headed the Clarendon County NAACP unit. He helped begin the fight to get school bus transportation for African-American children. As you will see when we discuss civil rights, this case became part of the larger effort that ended segregated public schools. As you will learn, Rev. DeLaine paid a high price for his leadership.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

A group of African-Americans who left a white church founded the AME Zion Church in New York in 1796. By the early 1820s, the church had begun to grow. It first sent missionaries into South Carolina after the Civil War. In 1866 freedmen started the Metropolitan AME Zion Church in Chester. The AME Zion Church grew and by 1890 had almost 45,000 members in South Carolina.

Many of the early leaders of the AME Zion Church were also leaders in Reconstruction era South Carolina. Frederick Albert Clinton, who had learned to read and write while still enslaved, helped organize the Mount Carmel AME Zion Church in Lancaster County. Clinton was a representative from Lancaster at the constitutional convention in 1868. He was a state senator until 1877. His brother, Isom Caleb Clinton, served as a minister at the same church. Isom opened a school there for African-American children. He helped establish thirty churches and eventually became a bishop. Clinton Junior College in Rock Hill was named for him.

The first minister at Metropolitan AME Zion Church, D. I. Walker, was Chester's Commissioner of Education from 1870 to 1874. He served in the state Senate from 1874 to 1877. In his role as church leader, he helped establish the AME Zion Conference in the state.

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

Both the AME and the AME Zion churches grew much larger than the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. It was originally the southern division of the Methodist Episcopal Church. But in 1870 it broke away as the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. It became the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in 1954. After the Civil War, African-Americans in this church wished to be independent of the white church organization. The Methodists initially wanted to keep their African-American members, but they wanted individual churches segregated by race. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church grew slowly in South Carolina. African-Americans did not trust it. They

remembered its ties with the old Southern Methodist Churches and called it the "Rebel Church." By 1890, church members in the state numbered only about 3,500. The church did begin to grow as a new generation came of age. However, it remained smaller than the other African-American Methodist churches.

An early leader of this denomination was Richard H. Vanderhorst, who had once been enslaved. He became known for his preaching. African-Americans organized Sidney Park Church in Columbia in 1885. A fire destroyed the original building in 1893. The replacement, built with volunteer labor and the $1,000 they raised, still stands.

The United Methodist Church

Early in American history, the Methodist church stated its opposition to enslavement. They suggested that no members should be slaveholders. To no one's surprise, the Southern churches did not accept the suggestion at that time. The church gained few members in the South until it was willing to suggest that perhaps the benefits of Christianity were greater than the disadvantages of enslavement.

The Methodist church was actually organized in South Carolina before the Civil War. It was mainly African-American. In the Methodist church of the early 1800s, African-Americans were lay leaders treated with a degree of equality rarely found.

In 1865, Northern missionaries founded the conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in South Carolina. After the Civil War, Northern Methodists organized a Freedman's Aid Society to help African-Americans in the South. It was responsible for developing many schools and colleges. Baker Institute in Orangeburg, for example, trained many of those who became ministers of the church. Baker Institute eventually became Claflin College.

Centenary Church in Charleston was among the churches founded. Members bought it from the white congregation of a Baptist church for $20,000 in gold. They sold their valuables in order to make the purchase. A freedman named Lupis founded the Mount Zion United Methodist Church in Kingstree in 1869. Members built a church building in 1904 and replaced it in 1972. Other churches were Wesley United Methodist Church, founded in Columbia in 1869, Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in Orangeburg in 1866, and Friendship United Methodist Church, founded in Nesmith in the 1860s.

In the 1880s, the Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal-South, and Methodist Protestant churches all united. In 1968 after further additions, the church became the United Methodist Church. This racially mixed group has included many active African-American members and leaders.

One of the ironic aspects of the post-Civil War era is the reversal of the segregated areas of life. Before the war, many churches were integrated while most other parts of life were segregated. After the war, blacks and whites began to associate in politics and other aspects of life. However, churches became more and more separated from each other. So they remained. Even today, blacks and whites rarely worship together on Sunday morning. Martin Luther King, Jr., himself a minister, once called Sunday morning the most segregated time in America.

Both groups appear to have preferred this religious separation. Each could have its own leadership, social, and political activities. This separation was probably more important for the blacks after whites shut them out of other leadership areas. However, whites did little to encourage church integration. Once enslavement had ended, whites felt little or no need to control or watch black worship gatherings. Recently, Methodists in South Carolina have made an effort to overcome this separateness with the election of Bishop Joseph B. Bethea, an African-American to head the South Carolina Methodist Conference of the United Methodist Church. Such moves could lead black Methodists in the state back into a unified church. However, as of the early 1990s, the AME and the AME Zion churches tend to attract more African-Americans than the United Methodists.

The Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian church, much like the Methodists, had also opposed enslavement until about 1820. Despite this, it had few African-American members until around 1870. After the Civil War, the group organized a number of churches in South Carolina that were affiliated with the Northern church. The Second Presbyterian Church was organized at Sumter in 1880.

As with many of the other African-American churches, it worked on self-help projects. Its second minister, J. C. Watkins, started a school. This was the Kendall Institute, which held classes from first grade through high school. The Trinity United Presbyterian Church was organized in Mayesville in 1887. Many community leaders came from this church. McKinley Washington, for example, was both a minister and an important state legislator of the 1980s and 1990s. Although the Presbyterian church was not able to claim a large number of members, it produced a number of religious leaders. It also produced a college president. Daniel Jackson Sanders became president of Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte in 1891.

The Episcopal Church

The Episcopal church had allowed free African-Americans to belong to the church before the Civil War. However, they were segregated from white members. During Reconstruction, African-Americans started St. Mark's Protestant Episcopal Church in Charleston. It did not have an African-American minister until 1887. Although the congregation made large contributions, they were not admitted to the Diocese because of race. St. Barnabas Protestant Episcopal Church was founded in 1889 in Jenkinsville. It ran a school that provided an education for African-Americans for many years before it closed.

In 1875, the Reformed Episcopal Church was founded in South Carolina. Most of the rural African-American churches joined it, although St. Mark's did not. By the early 1900s, it had over 2,250 members. That was more than twice as many members as the Protestant Episcopal Church.

Catholic Churches after the Civil War

After the Civil War, a new Catholic church was founded in Charleston. In 1866 African-American Catholics bought an old synagogue. In 1867 when remodeling was completed, it opened as St. Peter's Catholic Church. Members opened a school at the church later that year. As the result of a merger in 1967, it became St. Patrick's Church.

Pentecostal and Holiness Churches

In the 1900s, African-Americans created a number of new churches in South Carolina. Many of these were responding to the new Pentecostal movement. Pentecostals believe in freely expressing religious feelings that are inspired by the Holy Spirit, such as "speaking in tongues," or speaking in strange languages. These included the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas, founded in 1922. The St. Mark Holiness Church was organized in Salters in 1880. The Greater St. James Holiness Church was established in Williamsburg County in 1931. The Bible Way Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ World Wide was started near Columbia in 1963. The church began broadcasting services over the radio in 1972. It also built a nursery school for the community of Arthurtown.

The Baptist Church

Baptists formed South Carolina's largest African-American church after the Civil War. The Baptist movement had attracted many poor people, both white and black, even before the Civil War. In general, individual Baptist churches have always tended to be quite independent. This made it much easier for the African-American churches to split away from the Southern Baptist Convention. In many cases, African-American congregations were expelled from the white churches. African-Americans created so many new Baptist churches in the state after the war that forming a separate convention was quite easy for them. By the end of the 1870s, African-Americans had their own state Baptist conventions all over the South. In the 1890s, the state conventions formed the National Baptist Convention of the United States. The convention assisted with church literature, music, and the organizational efforts of sending missionaries abroad. By the beginning of the 1900s, the South Carolina convention, along with other National Baptists, were sending missionaries to Africa. By the middle of the 1970s, African-American Baptists in South Carolina numbered about 365,000.

Many famous Baptist churches date back to the period after the Civil War. These include the First Af-

African-American Baptists practice the ritual of immersion in Darlington County in Cedar Creek in 1904. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, *slide 186 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Courtesy Darlington County Historical Commission.*

rican Baptist Church in Beaufort. It stands next to the Robert Smalls house. The Central Baptist Church is located nearby on St. Helena Island. The Central Church also provided a gathering place and school for early Civil War missionaries to the South Carolina Sea Islands. These people, who were mainly Quakers, founded the famous Penn School on St. Helena Island.

Another major church founded during this period was the Morris Street Baptist Church in Charleston. In 1865, Fleming W. Prince, who later became a graduate of Benedict College, and seventy-three other people began the church, meeting at first in a two-room building. In Camden, 104 people formed the Mount Moriah Church. Monroe Boykin, who had once been enslaved, led them for the next thirty-four years. In Greenville, sixty-nine people began holding services in a wooden church in 1867. This became the Springfield Baptist Church. Charles Gandy was their minister for the next fifty years. He also played a major role in the state convention. John Phillips, who later studied religion at the University of South Carolina, started the Friendship Baptist Church in Aiken in 1866. One of their pastors was the famous Richard Carroll, a graduate of Benedict College. As you know, Carroll was a major figure around the turn of the century. He was one of a number of church leaders who advised moderation and yielding to whites on matters of segregation.

While there are other African-American religious groups in South Carolina, such as the Black Muslims, most of them are quite small in number. Because of their small size, they have much less influence on community life. As you can see from this survey of major groups, African-Americans have a rich and varied religious history in South Carolina.

People Helping People: the Reverend Charles Jaggers

Thousands of wonderful and remarkable stories exist of people helping other people during the hard times of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Most of them are now lost. One that has not been lost is the story of the Reverend Charles Jaggers. Born into enslavement in 1831 in Fairfield County, Jaggers underwent a religious conversion when he was fourteen. He began preaching. That part is not so unusual, but the

A Richard Roberts photo of the Rev. Charles Jaggers in the early 1920s before his death in 1924. Although he was born into enslavement, he became a preacher who spent his life ministering to prisoners and built the only home for elderly African-Americans that existed in the period. Courtesy of Roberts family.

rest of the story is. He managed to raise enough money through his preaching to start an old folks home in Columbia. It was the only one in Columbia for African-Americans. He also raised money for a home for African-American orphans. Jaggers did not just preach to those who could afford to give him money. He became a minister to convicts. When he died in 1924, his funeral attracted thousands of people ranging from ex-convicts to bankers and politicians. Today you can see a bronze statue of him in the Columbia Museum of Art.

The Political and Social Role of Churches

Had it not been for churches providing opportunities for schooling, many African-Americans would have had little chance for an education. Church schools offered an elementary education to many African-Americans. Some went beyond that.

Churches also played a support role in other ways. When Martha Schofield first came to South Carolina to teach in the years after the Civil War, the thanks she received from African-American church members helped keep up her spirits. After she founded her school in Aiken in 1869, the local AME church held a special meeting to thank her. Later on, the school was short of money. The school might have to close. The church came to the rescue. They held an exhibition which raised $42. That does not sound like much, but it saved the school!

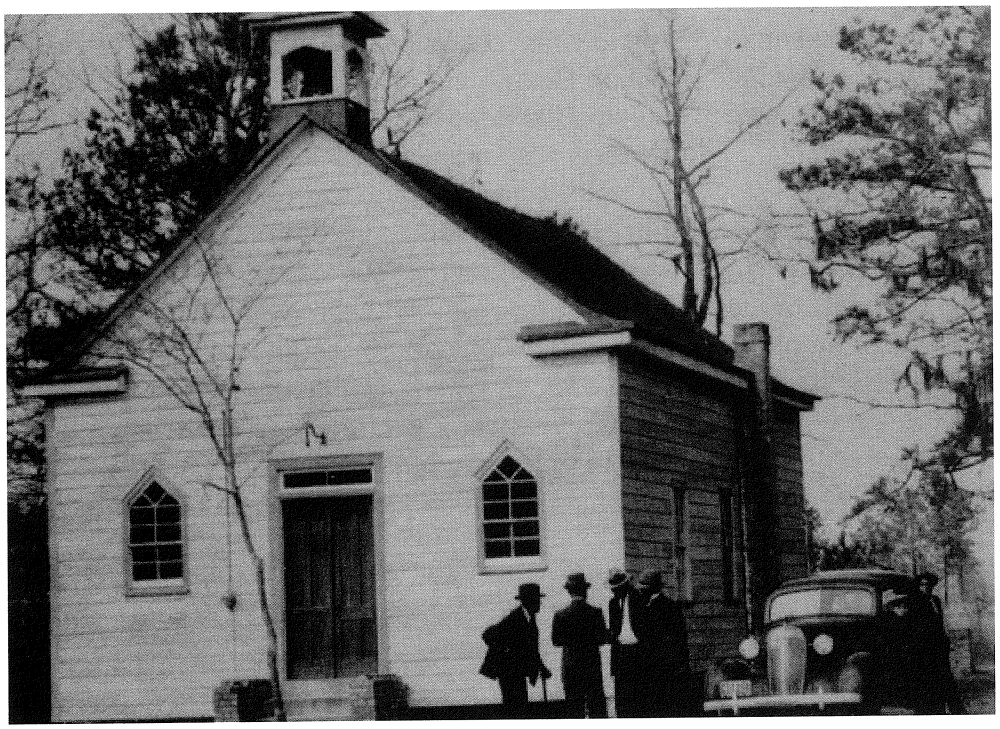
Back then, there were no government services to help the poor. Churches also assumed this role. For example, in 1865 members of a Presbyterian church in Columbia were caring for two elderly people who were unable to care for themselves. In 1876, a drought left many members of a Barnwell Methodist church near starvation. Abram Middleton, the minister, took the lead in appealing for help from well-to-do members of the community.

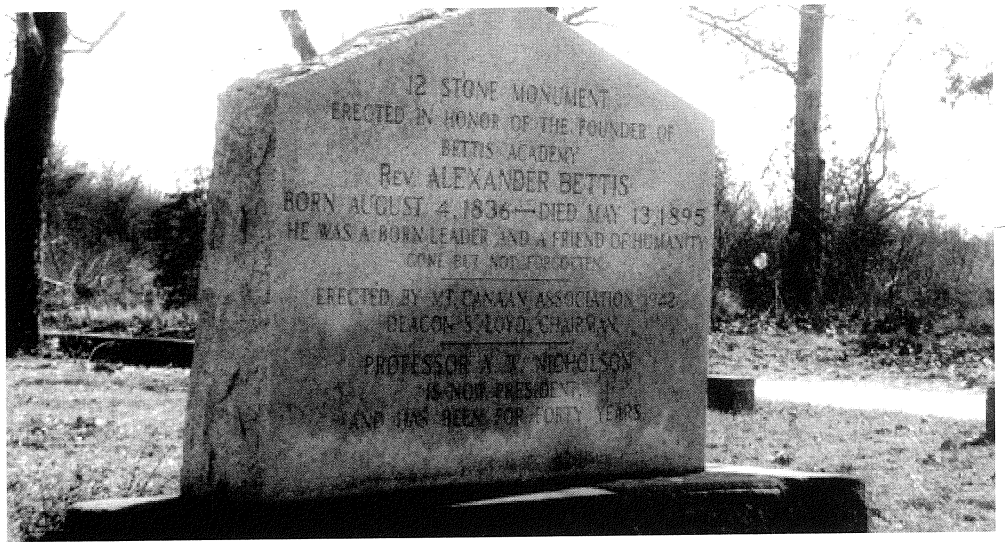
Churches also played at least a limited role in politics. From the time of Reconstruction to the present day, African-American ministers have focused sermons on the evils of society and how to correct them. Most of the African-American churches supported the policies of the Republican government. Members of the Methodist church were among the most politically active. Two Methodist ministers, Benjamin Franklin Randolph and Benjamin Franklin Whittemore, were leaders in the Republican Party. You may remember that Randolph was assassinated in 1868. Whittemore held political office at both the national and the state levels. However, whites forced

him to leave the state in 1877. A number of other Methodist ministers were delegates to the 1868 convention. Many other churches actively encouraged their members to vote during Reconstruction. However, some churches preferred to keep their religion separate from their politics. They believed their job was to focus on the saving of souls.

Ministers became central figures in African-American communities. These active, energetic people served as role models and leaders during the era of segregation. They provided guidance in harsh times. Abraham Robinson built up church membership all across the state before he was called to serve in Philadelphia. When not preaching, he used his energies as a boxer and wrestler. A. J. Stokes, who served at eight churches in South Carolina before he was called to Alabama, was active in the National Baptist Convention as well. Jacob Javan Durham turned down a position as professor at Meharry Medical College after finishing a degree there. Instead, he returned to South Carolina. He wanted to help his people. His efforts helped create Morris College in Sumter.

As you will learn in the chapter on civil rights, African-American ministers played a central role in





(Top) An African-American church in Moncks Corner in 1941. Photo by Jack Delano. Library of Congress LC-USF34 43460. (Bottom) Monument for Rev. Alexander Bettis one of many ministers who helped further education after the state failed to provide decent public education for African-Americans. The monument stands at the site of the Bettis Academy in Edgefield County. It was erected in 1942. Photo by Aimee Smith.

the struggle. As you have learned in this chapter, that was not at all a new role for them to play. The post-Civil War African-American churches were the place for building social, political, and cultural as well as religious leadership in the state. African-American ministers have always played a leadership role. In the early years of the civil rights struggle, ministers were often leaders in the NAACP. They provided a meeting place for the NAACP in their churches, often at great risk. Some churches were bombed as a result. The election of I. DeQuincey Newman to the state Senate in 1984 was not mere chance. He was not only the first African-American state senator in over 100 years. He was also a Methodist minister and a state leader of the NAACP. His education in church-founded schools and his leadership role in the church had prepared him. He and many others were ready when the time was right.

A Religion of Endurance and Hope

As the 1900s draws to a close, African-American churches are grappling with new problems. As the rest of society, they face the problems of drug use and family break-up. Keeping young people in the church can be difficult. Churches have developed programs to tackle these problems. By acting as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, church members reach out to young people in the community. They offer help with schoolwork and a sympathetic adult figure who is there when young people need someone with whom to talk. Project Spirit, for example, is a program started in 1978 to help elementary school children develop pride in their cultural identity while learning to live in a racially-mixed world. Parents are drawn in and expected to participate. By doing all this, African-American churches are simply continuing a long tradition of combating racism and providing help for those in the community who are in need.

As you have seen, churches have generally remained separated by race. Churches like the United Methodist, which have experimented with sending white ministers to black churches and black ministers to white churches, are still unusual. Cases like Bishop Bethea are an exception. This may be because of the need to build racial pride and strength in the face of so many hardships. From this pride and strength comes courage to work for a gospel of social justice and equality. Certainly many African-American religious leaders during the periods of Reconstruction and segregation understood this need and developed this courage. From a deeply held religious conviction, they worked to advance African-Americans toward full equality. South Carolinians of all races can look with pride at the help and leadership they provided in the face of adversity.